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Emotion Regulation Strategies and Goals of Distance Learning Students in an Assessed Online Collaborative Project

Jake Hillard¹, Karen Kear¹, Helen Donelan¹, Caroline Heaney¹

¹The Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom

Being able to effectively regulate emotions is viewed as a crucial process in online learning. With an increasing use of social and collaborative activities in online learning environments, there are many unique challenges that may impact emotion regulation in these settings, such as a lack of social and emotional cues. Currently, there is limited research exploring emotion regulation strategies (i.e. how learners regulate their emotions) and emotion regulation goals (i.e. why learners regulate their emotions) of students in these online collaborative learning environments. In the present study, the emotion regulation strategies and goals used by 17 distance learning students undertaking an assessed, online, collaborative group project were explored. An online diary was used to gather self-report data at six-time points during the group activity. In each diary entry, participants were asked to select both a pleasant and unpleasant emotion they had experienced in relation to the group project, and indicate whether they had attempted to regulate each emotion. If they had, they were asked to describe how and why they had tried to regulate their emotions. Results revealed that students used a variety of strategies to regulate pleasant and unpleasant emotions. It was also found that participants described having emotion regulation goals primarily aimed at changing the momentary emotional experience (hedonic goals) as well as goals focused on other outcomes resulting from changing the experience or expression of specific emotions (instrumental goals). A brief discussion of the implications for educators and learning designers conclude this presentation.